

Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S QUARTERLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

COMING EVENTS

Friday, Dec 2, 2011
First Fridays Art Walk
 A Taste of Monterey
 Old Town Salinas
 5:00pm-8:00pm*
 Stop by A Taste of Monterey
 in Old Town Salinas on your
 journey through the First Fridays
 Art Walk. Enjoy art from a
 featured local artist, while we
 stay open later!

Saturday, Dec 3, 2011
Holiday Port Party
 A Taste of Monterey
 Cannery Row
 7:00pm-9:00pm*
 Enjoy Chocolate and Cheese
 tastings to complement
 some wonderful Monterey
 Ports! Check our Facebook or
 website for more details.

Friday, Dec 30, 2011
Last Fridays Wine Bar
 A Taste of Monterey
 Cannery Row
 6:00pm-9:00pm*
 Join us on the last Friday of
 every month from 6pm to 9pm.
 A Taste of Monterey, Cannery
 Row is keeping its doors open
 later and offering special wine
 by the glass prices. Start your
 weekend off with a relaxing
 view and a glass of Monterey's
 finest.

* No new tastings after 5:45pm

WINTER REFERRALS



Refer a friend to the Monterey
 Wine Club, and after they join, you
 get a \$20.00 Gift Card!



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ALL ABOUT THE Bubbles

There just seems to be something special about wine with bubbles in it. Be it at a wedding or on New Year's Eve - opening a bottle of sparkling wine marks a special occasion. Those effervescent bubbles seem to have a way of bringing out smiles, and its reputation of making one "giddy" far quicker than expected is well known (and memories of following day head-aches solidify the tender remembrances).

Perhaps we should begin by defining a few things. First off, a bottle of sparkling wine can technically only be called "champagne" if it is grown and produced in the Champagne region of France, similar to brandy from Cognac or port from Portugal. Therefore, when discussing "the bubbly", we should stick with referring to it as sparkling wine on a generalized basis (this is also a public safety announcement as French regulatory agents take this matter *extremely* serious). Secondly, a sparkling wine is defined as a wine with significant levels of carbon dioxide within it, which provides the bubbles.

It does make one wonder though how anyone ever perceived that bubbles in wine would be a good thing...I mean can you imagine having your glass of Cabernet Sauvignon fizzing with bubbles? No, no you cannot, which is exactly what people thought centuries ago when they noticed that occasionally their wine bottles had carbonation in them.

You likely recognize the name Dom Perignon and associate him with champagne/sparkling wine. In fact, the Dom Perignon champagne label may arguably be more recognized than any other wine bottle on the planet. And although it is appropriate for Monsieur Perignon to receive credit for promoting quality sparkling wine, he by no means invented the process from scratch; his discovery of the positive attributes of carbonation in wine was actually accidental. Perignon was tasked originally with figuring out how to rid the situation from certain bottles occasionally having bubbles in them!



Now, let's get into the vineyards. It may not be surprising that the most common varietal for white sparkling wine production is Chardonnay, but it may be that the second is most likely Pinot Noir. Grapes used for sparkling wine production tend to be best when sourced from cooler growing climates, which explains why the Champagne region, far in the northeast of France, is the ancestral home of sparkling wines (and this is also why our own Monterey County produces some fantastic sparklers as well!).



Sparkling wine grapes are harvested early in order to capture high acidity levels and to avoid high sugar levels; avoiding tannins is another goal. To deter this as much as possible, extra care is taken during the harvest to avoid splitting of the berries, and grapes destined for sparkling wine production are pressed as soon as possible.

Moving on, let's venture into the winemaking process. White wine grapes are the most popular for use in making sparkling wines, and it is even possible for winemakers to make varietal sparklers, such as *blanc de blancs* (white of whites), which is 100% Chardonnay. However, the vast majority of sparkling wines produced are blends of several varietals, vineyards, and vintages - this is why it is not uncommon at all to see non-vintage sparkling wines.

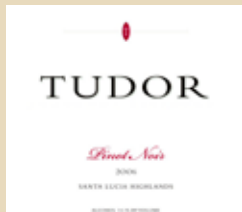
Red wine grapes can be used for white sparkling production (as the juice is initially clear without prolonged exposure to grape skins), and these sparklers are known as *blanc de noirs* (white of blacks). *Rosé* sparkling wines are quite popular, especially in Spain and Portugal. Although rare, there are also red sparklers.

For all sparkling wines, primary fermentation occurs in the winemaking process, just as it does with still wine production. The alteration in the process that distinguishes sparkling production occurs with the introduction of a secondary fermentation (which can occur naturally on its own, explaining why Perignon began experimenting). This secondary fermentation is conducted in various methods explained below, but a by-product is the creation of carbon dioxide captured in the wine. Estimates of the amount of bubbles one bottle of sparkling can produce ranges from 50 to 250 million...that's a lot of bubbles!

As for the different methods to encourage the secondary fermentation, the most well known is the *méthode champenoise*, sometimes referred to as the "traditional" method. In this method, a base blend wine (*cuvée*) *Continued Inside*

RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

TUDOR WINES - 2006 SLH Pinot Noir



Vineyard: The vineyard for this wine is located in the Santa Lucia Highlands. This bench land runs along the west side of the Salinas Valley above the valley floor, between the City of Gonzales and the Arroyo Seco canyon. A fault line divides the valley floor and the Santa Lucia Highlands. Its southeast facing slopes allow the highlands to take advantage of the morning sun. Sitting above the valley fog that shrouds the Salinas Valley each morning during the summer, long cool days characterize the area.

Winemaking: At Tudor Wines, fruit is selected from family-owned vineyards and is transformed into wine using traditional techniques. These include small fermentations mixed by hand and aging in French barrels. The resulting wine has a purity of expression that cannot be duplicated on a

larger scale. By working closely with their family growers and winemaking staff, they made sure that low yields combined with maximum grape maturity to produce wine with optimal flavor profiles - a balance of ripeness, acidity and tannins.

Tasting Notes: Tight and focused, with a firm mineral and pebble base, leading to ripe cherry, berry and plum fruit that's focused, concentrated, full-bodied and persistent.

Tudor Wines
2006 SLH
Pinot Noir

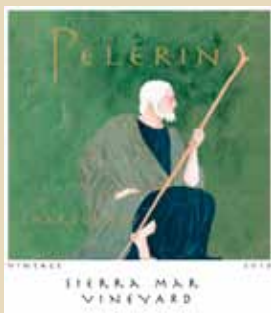
Alcohol
14.1%

AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Composition
100% Pinot Noir

Aging Potential
4-5 years

PELERIN WINES - 2010 Sierra Mar Chardonnay



Winery: Pelerin is the French word for pilgrim. The motif represents an old world traveler on his humble journey and is emblematic of our quest to produce top-level wines from the Santa Lucia Highlands appellation.

Building on exceptional quality fruit, Pelerin Wines is dedicated to traditional winemaking methods and to the creation of well-balanced wines with intensity, richness and multi-layered complexity. We aim to express uniqueness and deliciousness in the wines, as well as to convey our passion and creativity to the people who enjoy them.

Winemaking: Owner/winemaker Chris Weidemann is former Assistant Winemaker both to John Kongsgaard at Newton Vineyard, and also with Morgan Winery. His style focuses on textural balance and complexity while creating intense and dramatic wines, operating based on feel and taste as well as science. As consulting winemaker to Paraiso Vineyards, he also makes the Pelerin Wines at that facility.

Tasting Notes: This second release of Chardonnay for Pelerin is from the newest of the famed Franciscioni-farmed vineyards of the SLH. The Sierra Mar Vineyard planted in 2006 is located about 2 miles north of the Pisoni Vineyard at a remarkably high elevation of 500 feet up the slope. Typical of Pelerin styling this Chardonnay shows California sunshine yet with only 30% new oak (hogshead puncheons) and full malolactic conversion, it reveals a lush and round mouthfeel, with elements of a higher toned European style, featuring crisp lemon, minerality, a restrained elegance of body yet full of apple, pear and kiwi flavor.

Pelerin Wines
2010 Sierra Mar
Chardonnay

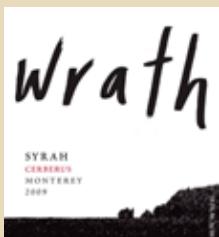
Alcohol
14.4%

AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Composition
100% Chardonnay

Aging Potential
3-4 years

WRATH - 2009 Cerberus Syrah



Winery: Wrath wines are a record of the topography, geology and climate of a finite, naturally defined piece of land over the span of a growing season. They chronicle the elaborate dance between terroir, grape, people and time. While all of our wines possess strong varietal characteristics, their real strength is their ability to deliver the unique aromatics, flavors and textures of a specific site.

Vineyard: Wrath's Estate San Saba Vineyard is set in a sheltered nook just below the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. This is a cool site with little rainfall and one of the longest growing seasons in the world. Their soils, Arroyo Gravelly Loam and Hanford Gravelly Sandy Loam, provide a low-vigor, well-draining, disease- and pest-free medium for their vines. They also impart a subtle mineral quality to their wines.

The second vineyard, Fairview Ranch is located in the heart of the Santa Lucia Highlands, southeast of McIntyre Vineyard and just northwest of Gary's Vineyard. The site features a well-exposed, gently-rolling hillside with gravelly loam soils. Wines from Fairview tend to be intense and highly aromatic. The Doctor's Vineyard, third of the blend, is one of the most important sites in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. It is located west of the Pinnacles National Monument along the eastward-facing slopes above the Salinas Valley. The wines from the Doctor's Vineyard are uniformly dense, supple, opulent, structured and distinctive.

Tasting Notes: Cerberus, in Greek mythology, is the three-headed dog that guards the gates of Hell. A fitting analogy to a blend of the best barrels from each of three vineyards sourced for this wine. A nose of tapenade, smoke and black plum joins expansive flavors of white and black pepper, nutmeg and dark berries. The resulting Syrah is brawny and untamed, with the balance and acidity typical of a cool climate.

Wrath
2009 Cerberus
Syrah

Alcohol
14.5%

AVA
Monterey

Composition
100% Syrah

Aging Potential
5-6 years

Cover Article Continued

is bottled with sugar and yeast, with the sugar providing a food source for the yeast, eventually releasing carbon dioxide into the wine. The dead yeast cells (called "lees") are removed from the wine and *voilà!*

Another method used to produce sparkling wines is the *method charmant*. This method uses stainless steel tanks that are pressurized, which stimulates the process of the yeast and sugar interaction, and then the wine is bottled (i.e. basically it's a faster process than the two previously described methods). The last method used is carbon injection, which doesn't involve a secondary fermentation process, and instead consists of injecting carbon dioxide gas directly into the wine... soda pop comes to mind. As you can imagine, the carbon injection method is used to produce the cheapest bottles of sparklers.

Brut or *Doux*: how sweet do you like your sparkling wines? The amount of sugar introduced for the secondary fermentation process will ultimately determine the level of sweetness in a sparkling wine. *Brut Natural* is the driest, although fairly limited in production. *Extra Brut* is the more common driest style of sparkling wine you will encounter, followed by *Brut*, which is arguably the most popular of all styles. *Extra Dry* (also called Extra Sec) is slightly less dry than *Brut*, followed by *Sec*. The two sweetest styles of sparkling wine are *Demi-Sec* and then *Doux*.

Sweet or dry in style, sparkling wines are produced around the world. California and France are major producers; the Aussies have a Shiraz sparkler; the Spanish produce *Cava*; the Portuguese have *Espumante*; the Germans have *Sekt*; the South Africans produce *Cap Classique*; and the Italians have various versions, with their generic term for sparkling wine being *Spumante*.

So, there you have a brief overview of this intriguing style of wine, and we hope that you will savor your glasses of *bubbly* this holiday season. One last point is that although it may be fun to open a bottle of sparkling wine by "popping" the cork out and projecting a burst of fizz...keep in mind that by doing this you are doing your bottle a great disservice. Not only are you wasting wine (nothing less than a crime on its own), but you'll be releasing so much carbon dioxide that you will not be able to fully appreciate the bubbling in your glass!

-Bryce Ternet

(Bryce Ternet is a contributing editor and is the author of three books.)

"Like" him at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/M-Bryce-Ternet/124070024286223>



A YEAR In the Vineyard



Once again, back to the vineyards. Last month we described expectations for the 2011 Monterey County harvest and provided a grower's prediction on the coming 2012 season. But let's return to what's been occurring in the vineyards themselves over the last couple of months.

Following the harvest, the vines continue to experience a degree of photosynthesis. During this time, carbohydrate reserves are created throughout the process and stored in the roots and trunks of the vines. This storing of carbs will go on until the vine can retain no more, after which time the chlorophyll in the leaves begins breaking down (we see this through the changing color of the leaves). From the time of the first frost, the leaves begin falling as the vine enters its winter dormancy period.

As the leaves have fallen, we have come to the conclusion of our discussion. It's been a pleasure being with you on our journey into the seasonal lifecycle of the vineyards over the past year. Just as the vines are now going dormant for their winter nap, we sign-off as well and look forward to the cycle beginning again in the spring. *Cheers!*

RECIPE

Cheese Fondue ~ HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING Serves: 8-10

Fondue is an easy, fun, crowd-pleaser of a party food. The most traditional recipe is made with Emmental or Gruyere cheese, white wine and kirsch, but endless variations are possible, including the additions of raclette (another traditional cheese), Stilton, cheddar, or goat cheese, and the substitution of apple cider in place of wine.

Ingredients:

12 ounces	Gruyere cheese, grated (4.5 cups)
12 ounces	Emmental cheese, grated 4.5 cups)
1 1/2 cups	dry white wine
1 clove	garlic, halved crosswise
2 tablespoons	freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons	cornstarch
	freshly grated nutmeg
	freshly ground white pepper
1 loaf	French bread, cut into one-inch cubes

Method:

1. Rub inside of a fondue pot with garlic; discard garlic. Pour cider or wine into pot, and place over medium-low heat. When liquid starts to bubble, start adding cheeses by the handful, stirring until melted and combined.
2. Whisk together lemon juice and cornstarch in a small bowl until cornstarch dissolves; stir into cheese mixture. Continue stirring until mixture is smooth and bubbling slightly, about five minutes. Season with nutmeg and pepper.
3. Transfer fondue pot to the table, and keep warm over the fondue pot warmer. Serve with chunks of French bread. Some other suggestions are apples and blanched vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and asparagus. Spear with fondue forks or wooden skewers, dip, swirl and enjoy!



THE Monterey Grapevine

O-N-L-I-N-E

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PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:

A Taste of Monterey
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Remember, as a Club Member, you receive a 15% discount on all purchases and a weekly complimentary tasting.

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 Pelerin Wines 2010 Sierra Mar Chardonnay		\$42.00	\$31.50	\$33.60
 Wrath 2009 Cerberus Syrah		\$39.00	\$29.25	\$31.20
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